60p

THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

89

Psychic surgery
The man who created life
Long shadow of past lives
Meaning of UFO cults
Trouble with curses

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THE Unexplained
MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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In next week's issue
If curses are conscious invocations of misfortune against others, what are jinxes? People who suffer from them include the Dutch family whose hands turn black six months after they are born and the Guinness brewery family who lost four members in as many months. Their cases are described in **Jinxes and curses**. A hair-raising journey in a car that refused to behave when set upon by a UFO in Maine, USA, features in **UFO Casebook**, while **Lyonesse** asks whether this legendary site could really have been the Scilly Isles – or not. Could one of America's best-loved actors, Clark Gable, have been saved if his doctors had heeded some unusual advice? We tell all in a new series on **Biorhythms**. We conclude with another new series – on **Physical mediums**, in which we describe remarkable evidence for the existence of a spirit world.
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Nothing but trouble

Curses have always been feared – with justice it seems, for disease, loss of loved ones and death have often befallen the victims. But is this coincidence or, asks PAUL SIEVEKING, could it be the direct result of knowing that one is cursed?

A Mycenaean funeral mask representing Agamemnon – one of the many sufferers from the ancient curse on the House of Atreus by Hermes. Agamemnon, the grandson of Atreus, was killed by his wife and her lover as a direct result

A CURSE IS AN INVOCATION of destruction or evil, part of the accustomed armoury of the priest, magician, shaman or ill-wisher. But do curses work and, if so, how? Swearing at someone gives vent to pent-up feelings; most psychologists would say that ritual curses do nothing more, *unless the victim is expecting trouble*. Sandford Cohen, a psychologist at Boston University, USA, is convinced from field research that curses can be lethal, because of the feeling of utter helplessness they can inspire. He sees a striking similarity between western Man dying from a fear of some disease generally believed to be fatal, and primitive Man dying from a witch doctor's curse.

Another explanation involves the 'tape recording' theory – that a thought can imprint itself on an object or person, and can be transferred to others. If the thought is malevolent, so is the effect. There do seem to be numerous cases of curse victims being totally sceptical of supernatural 'mumbo-jumbo', which nevertheless does nothing to save them from the effects.

Take the case of Robert Heinl junior, a retired colonel in the US Marine Corps. From 1958 to 1963 he served on Haiti as chief of the US naval mission, while his wife studied the voodoo religion. Afterwards, back in the United States, they wrote *Written in blood*, a history of Haiti that was openly critical of the ruling dynasty of François 'Papa Doc' Duvalier. Then they learned from a newspaper published by Haitian exiles that a curse had been placed on the book, probably after Papa Doc's death in 1971 by his widow, Simone.

At first, the Heinls were flattered that their book was thought to be worth cursing, but amusement soon turned to fear. First, the manuscript was lost on the way to the publishers, then it turned up four months later in a room the publishers never used. Meanwhile, the Heinls prepared another copy of the manuscript and sent it off for binding and stitching. The machine immediately broke down. A *Washington Post* reporter who was preparing to interview the authors was struck down with acute appendicitis. The colonel fell through a stage when he was delivering a speech, injuring his leg. And while walking near his home he was suddenly – and severely – bitten by a dog.

The omens continued, two involving the number 22, which Papa Doc considered a magic number. Finally, on 5 May 1979, the Heinls were on holiday on St Barthelemy Island, near Haiti, when the colonel dropped dead from a heart attack. His widow mused: 'There is a belief that the closer you get to Haiti, the more powerful the magic becomes.'

In Royal David's city

Curses, precisely laid down in many rituals, are still cast by priests in the major religions. In September 1981 Rabbi Moshe Hirsch, leader of the Neturei Karta, an orthodox Jewish sect, was threatening to invoke the 'Rod of Light' against the Israeli archaeologist Yigal Shilo if he persisted in excavating the biblical city of David, which the rabbi maintained involved desecrating a medieval Jewish cemetery. The archaeologists denied the existence of such a cemetery.

The Rod of Light ceremony involves the reading of a text based on *qabalistic* writings. The participants burn black candles, sound a ram's horn and invoke the name of the cursed man's mother. 'This ceremony is an absolute last resort,' said the rabbi. 'It has only been invoked twice in the last 30 years, both times with horrible consequences. There are many ways of dying, some less pleasant than others.' But unfortunately the

Left: Robert and Nancy Heinl, who fell foul of the Haitian dictator François 'Papa Doc' Duvalier and his wife Simone (below) while researching their book *Written in blood* – which was openly critical of Duvalier's regime – in the 1960s. The Heinls discovered that Simone Duvalier had cursed them and an extraordinary chain of events, culminating in the sudden death of Robert Heinl, followed. Coincidence? Nancy Heinl was in no doubt that the curse was responsible for their bad luck

rabbi claims he failed to discover Shilo's mother's name.

Even in the calm glade of the Church of England, spiritual contracts are occasionally put out on church thieves. Since the 1970s in Gloucestershire alone, two vicars have performed the commination service: the Reverend Harold Cheales of Wych Rissington in 1973, and the Reverend Robert Nesham of Down Ampney in 1981. The commination service contains 12 curses and leaves room for extemporisation. It first appeared in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, but in the 1928 revision 'curse' was replaced by 'God's anger and judgement'. It was traditionally used against enemies of the Church on the first day of Lent, or whenever a church or churchyard had been desecrated. Christian curses seem to be, on occasion, just as effective as demonic ones: the old abbeys that Henry VIII seized from the monks after the dissolution of the monasteries in the early 16th century often bedevilled their new owners over generations with the curses laid by angry monks (see box).

There is a widespread ancient belief that no good will come from disturbing old stones or buried treasure – folklore worldwide is full of such tales. We can see the theme continuing in the enduring popularity of the idea of a mummy's curse in newspapers and films. Some researchers believe that such deep-seated and widespread beliefs, as part of the collective unconscious, can exert a material influence, thus bringing myths to life – and perpetually reinforcing them.

A heart of stone

The old castle of Syrie in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, has a legendary curse on it. A group of stones in the river there is known as the Weeping Stones, one of which is missing. It is said that no heir to Syrie will ever succeed until the missing stone is found.

In 1944 a 2-tonne 'Witch's Stone' was shifted from a crossroads at Scrapfaggot Green, Great Leighs, Essex, England, to widen the road. Psychic havoc broke out. A great boulder was found outside the local pub, chickens were found locked up in rabbit hutches, rabbits were loose in the garden, the church bells chimed irregularly, 30 sheep and two horses were found dead in a field, and a village builder found his scaffold poles tumbled about 'like matchsticks'. The 'Witch's Stone' was replaced and peace was restored.

In 1980 a 30-tonne boulder was removed from the Devil's Marbles to a park in Tennant Creek, an isolated copper mining town in the Australian outback. Aborigines of the Warramungu tribe believe the Marbles are a relic from the 'Dream Time' – when ancestral spirits created the world – and any interference with such relics will lead to sickness and death. After the boulder's removal, a number of Aboriginal children fell ill

By fire and water

Battle Abbey in Sussex (below) was the scene of a grim curse laid on the descendants of Sir Anthony Browne, 'Esquire to the Body of Henry VIII, Master of the Horse and Justice in Eyre', in 1538.

with sores on their legs, and a tribal elder, Mick Taylor, warned that 'someone would get killed' if the stone were not returned. In March 1981 Mick Taylor died from meningitis at the age of 50. The town then agreed to return the boulder.

In late 1981 councillors in King's Lynn, Norfolk, England, refused to move an 18th-century obelisk that was in danger from vandals. A Latin inscription reads: 'Whoever shall remove or have removed this monument let him die the last of his line.'

Rocks of wrath

During the summer of 1977 airline vice-president Ralph Loffert, of Buffalo, New York state, USA, his wife and four children visited the Hawaiian volcano Mauna Loa. While there they collected some stones from the volcano despite a warning from the locals that this would anger the volcano goddess, Pele. Some claim to have seen Pele, who traditionally appears to warn of imminent eruptions. Shortly after they returned home, Mauna Loa erupted. Within a few months one of the Loffert boys, Todd, developed appendicitis, had knee surgery and broke his wrist; another son, Mark, sprained an ankle and broke his arm; another son, Dan, caught an eye infection and had to wear glasses; and the daughter, Rebecca, lost two front teeth in a fall. In July 1978, the Lofferts sent the stones to a friend in Hawaii who was asked to return them to the volcano. But the disasters continued – Mark hurt his knee, Rebecca broke three more teeth, Dan fractured a hand bone, while Todd dislocated an elbow and fractured his wrist again. Mark then confessed that he still had three stones. They were returned – and the trouble ceased.

Mrs Allison Raymond of Ontario, Canada, and her family also took some stones away from the volcano. She told reporters:

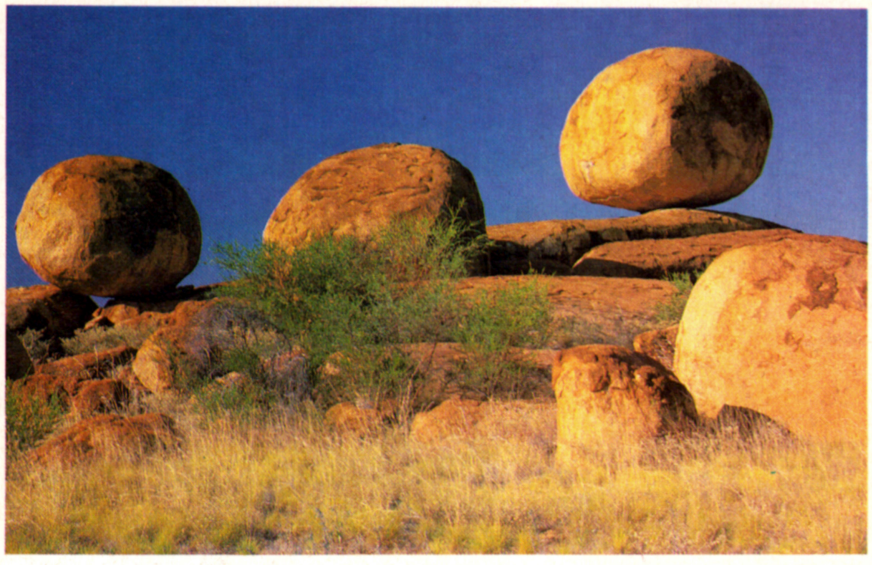
According to tradition, Sir Anthony was cursed at the feast held to celebrate his ownership of the abbey by a monk who was angry at the seizure of Church lands during the Reformation.

The curse was specific: the family would die 'by fire or water'. It seems, however, that the curse went awry: Sir Anthony's other property, Cowdray Park – which he had inherited from his half-cousin, the Earl of Southampton – was burned down; but this was much later, in 1793, after the property had passed into the hands of another family.

Antony Hippisley Coxe, compiler of *Haunted Britain* (1974), records that the curse came unstuck yet again, in 1907, when the Duchess of Cleveland – who had rented Battle Abbey briefly – drowned in its grounds on her way to church, but her daughter, who was with her, survived.

Above: a 788-year-old curse is ritually lifted by the Chief Rabbi at the consecration of Clifford's Tower in York on 31 October 1978. On the night of 16 March 1190, 150 Jews fled to the tower where they died by their own hand rather than fall into a mob's hands. The last to die was the Chief Rabbi, whose final act was to curse the city of York. Until well into the 20th century York was avoided by Jews – even though nearby Leeds has always had a thriving Jewish community

Right: 'The curse has come upon me, cried the Lady of Shallott' – Tennyson's doomed heroine prepares to meet her fate



Above: the Devil's Marbles, Australia, a sacred Aboriginal site. In 1980 one of the boulders was removed; Mick Taylor, a tribal elder, warned that the removal would lead to sickness and death. Several children fell ill – and he died the next year, at the age of 50

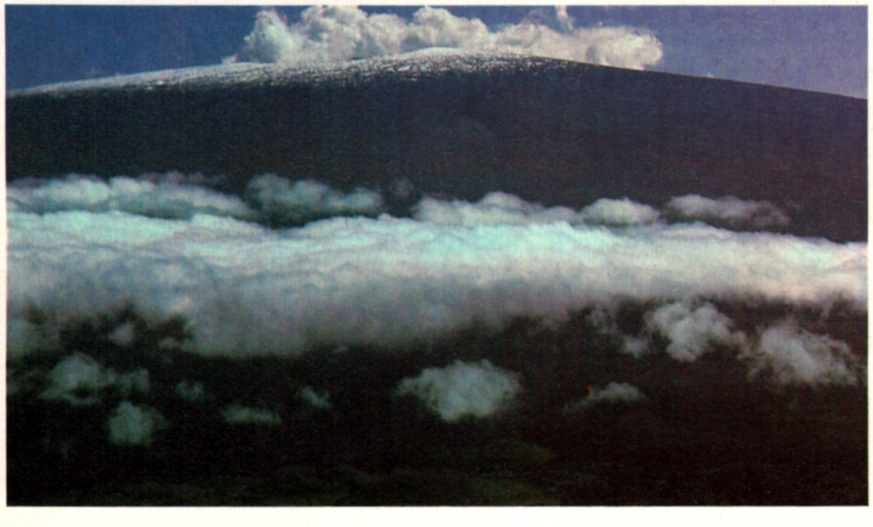
> My husband was killed in a head-on car crash and my mother died of cancer. My younger son was rushed to hospital with a pancreas condition that's slowly getting worse. Then he broke his leg. My daughter's marriage nearly broke up and it was only when I posted the rocks back that our luck improved.

Despite warnings, Nixon Morris, a hardwood dealer from El Paso, Texas, took a Mauna Loa stone home in 1979. After returning home he fell off his roof, lightning struck an aerial and ruined several home appliances, and his wife fell ill with a mysterious infection that left her knee swollen.

Then Morris broke a hip and thigh when he fought with a burglar in their house. The family cat was sleeping under the bonnet of his wife's car when she started the engine and was stripped of its fur down one side. Then Morris's grand-daughter fell and broke her arm in two places.

Morris said he had broken the rock in two and given a piece to a friend, adding: 'He brought the rock back to me after he wrecked four cars in less than two years, and he'd never before had a wreck in his life.' In March 1981 Morris sent the rocks back.

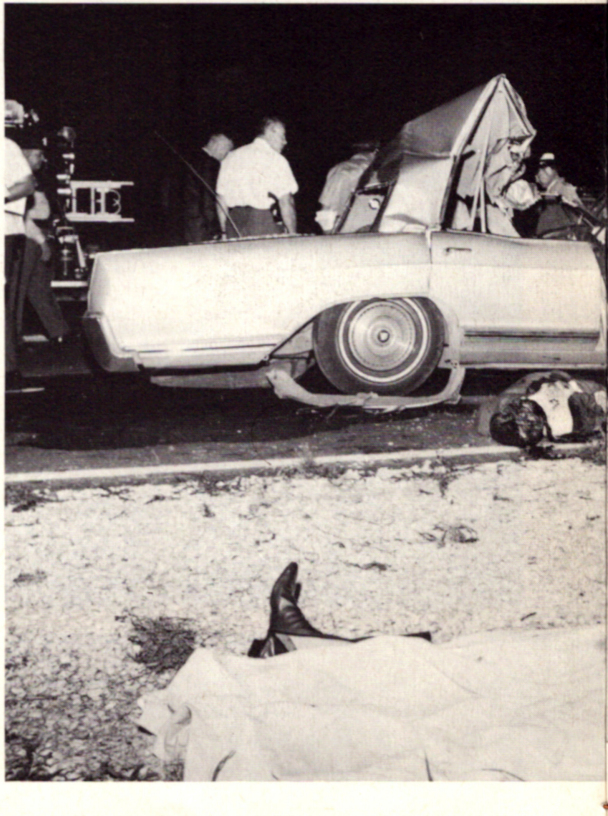
Below: the Mauna Loa volcano of Hawaii. In 1977 the Loffert family, on holiday from the USA, picked up some stones from the volcano – despite a warning that this would anger the local deity, the goddess Pele. A series of disasters struck the family, ceasing only when the last stone had been sent back to Hawaii. Other tourists have reported similar runs of bad luck after taking stones away



Jon Erickson, a naturalist at the Volcanoes National Park in Hawaii, said he receives up to 40 packages of rock a day from frightened tourists who have returned home.

Lieutenant Commander 'Buster' Crabbe dived with Royal Navy men in 1950 in Tobermory Bay, Isle of Mull, in search of the *Duque de Florencia*, a payship of the Spanish Armada, which had been sunk in 1588 with a reputed 30 million pounds of gold on board. One of the trophies with which he surfaced was a skull that medical experts said had belonged to a North African woman. Crabbe disappeared, some maintain mysteriously, while on an underwater mission near Russian warships in Portsmouth harbour in 1956. The following year a coroner decided that the headless body of a frogman washed up at Chichester, Sussex, was that of Crabbe.

The skull that had been found on the



wreck was kept in the Western Isles Hotel, Tobermory, Scotland, where one day the barman accidentally caused it to fall and break. The same day he crashed his motor scooter and cracked *his* skull. He never returned to the island. The hotel owner, Donald Maclean, stored the skull away in a cupboard. In 1970 Richard Forrester, the new English owner of the hotel, drilled a hole in the skull so that he could hang it up in his cocktail bar:

> I was using an ordinary electric drill. The first odd thing that happened was that the metal bit of the drill, after piercing the bone, bent inside at an angle of 45 degrees. I found this surprising but thought nothing more about it. Two hours later I was struck

The curse of the Pharaohs

Archaeologists can be said to be modern grave robbers – and as such seem to have paid the price, for many ancient Egyptian tombs apparently carry curses for any who dare to desecrate them.

According to the American journalist Webb Garrison, Professor S. Resden opened an Egyptian tomb in the 1890s that was thus inscribed: 'Whosoever desecrates the tomb of Prince Sennar will be overtaken by the sands and destroyed.' Resden knew he was doomed, it is said. He left Egypt by ship – and died on board, a victim of suffocation with no discernible cause. Small amounts of sand were found clutched in his hands.

The poetic neatness of this story is, it must be said, rather suspicious and should perhaps be taken with a pinch of salt – or sand.

But the 'curse of the pharaoh' continues. In September 1979, George LaBrash had a stroke while guarding the Tutankhamun mask (left) in San Francisco. In January 1982 he sued the city authorities for disability pay, claiming that the stroke was a job-related injury caused by the alleged curse on the tomb's desecration. The case was dismissed. Was this in itself a refinement of the curse? Has the curse of the boy king moved into legal circles?

Above: the appalling crash that killed film star Jayne Mansfield on 29 June 1967. This was widely rumoured as being no *accident* – Jayne had been cursed by her former friend, Anton la Vey, head of the Church of Satan

> by excruciating pain in the back of the head. I was completely incapacitated for two days. Since then I have been taking prescribed pills but the searing pain continues and never leaves.

And the only other person to handle the skull since the drilling had also experienced searing headaches.

The notion of a curse affecting a whole family is at least as old as civilisation. The ancient Greeks were firm believers in the efficacy of curses – the most celebrated curse affecting the house of Atreus: Atreus killed the son of the god Hermes in a love contest, and Hermes put a curse on the murderer 'and all his house'. Atreus killed his own son by mistake; his grandson, the Homeric hero Agamemnon, was killed by his wife and her lover; and she in turn was murdered by her son and daughter.

In Moorish Spain, a curse was believed to hang over the great Abencerrage family – 'the Flower of Granada'. Many died in war and vendettas before the whole family was wiped out by King Muley Hassan on one of the patios of the Alhambra palace during the 15th century.

Relatively speaking

In Britain, several aristocratic families are believed to be afflicted by family curses. In the 18th century the Scottish Earl of Breadaulbin moved a graveyard to build the castle of Taynmouth. According to tradition a lady whose grave was disturbed laid a curse on the family whereby no two earls of the same line would succeed each other. The prophecy apparently came true.

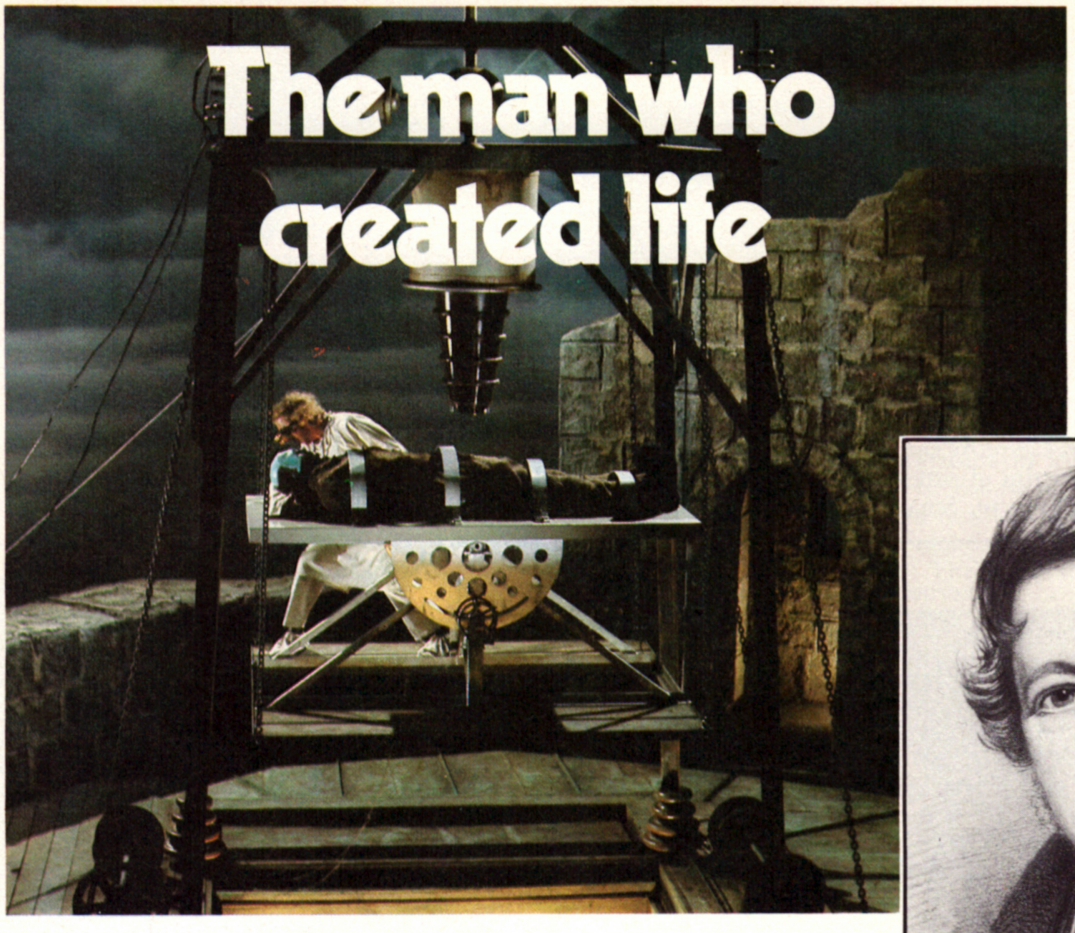
Even writing about curses might be considered a hazardous business, but this author draws a certain comfort from the apparent immunity of his father. In 1928 the magician Aleister Crowley ('The Beast'), recently expelled from Sicily, met the young radio producer Lance Sieveking in Cassis on the French Riviera. They spent many hours in conversation, and Crowley subsequently cast Sieveking's horoscope. It contained a number of predictions that were later fulfilled. One, however, was not. Crowley wrote: 'By the way, you will oblige me personally by dying at the age of forty-five.' Sieveking was then 32 but he disobligingly lived to be 75.

Above right: Lance Sieveking, broadcaster and father of author Paul Sieveking. He demonstrated an unusual immunity to a curse laid by black magician Aleister Crowley by living 30 years longer than the curse allowed

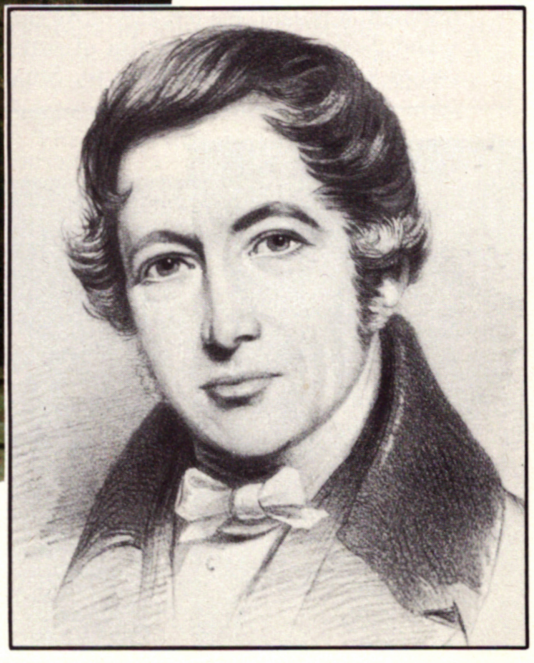
Crowley's curses, however, often successfully claimed their victims. The last to go was young Dr William Brown Thompson, who withheld the addicted Beast's supply of morphia. In a rage, Crowley put a curse on him, saying that when he died he would take the doctor with him. And so it came to pass. Crowley died on 1 December 1947, aged 72. Thompson was dead within 24 hours.

On page 1794: jinxes – how some people attract misfortune without being cursed

The man who created life



Frankenstein about to bring his monster to life (left) in the spoof film *Young Frankenstein* (1974). Andrew Crosse (below), an eccentric 19th-century gentleman-scientist, has been likened to Frankenstein because he may have created life during his electrical experiments



Out of his test tubes and retorts, Andrew Crosse is said to have created living creatures – and so threw his 19th-century world into a frenzy. PAUL BEGG asks if this English gentleman-scientist was a real-life Frankenstein

FEAR HANGS OVER the village as heavy and black as the threatening storm-clouds. In the distance a sprawling mansion stands gaunt against the hills. A dim yellow light from a ground floor window shows that the scientist is at home and at work. A roll of thunder echoes around the hills. A flash of lightning rends the sky. Suddenly the mansion window is ablaze with stark, almost incandescent light. The fear tightens as the villagers imagine the demonic activities that could be going on inside the grey, forbidding walls of the mansion.

This description could fit the popular image of Baron Victor Frankenstein at work, but it could be applied equally to a real-life gentleman-scientist named Andrew Crosse. He too had a compulsion towards unorthodox laboratory experiments and is said to have actually created life from inanimate matter.

Andrew Crosse was born into a wealthy English family on 17 June 1784. In 1793 he was sent to Dr Seyer's School in The Fort in Bristol, and it was here that he was introduced to science.

Later described by his second wife as one who 'delighted in whatever was strange and marvellous', Crosse was obsessed with the new science of electricity from about the age of 12. It is possible that his interest was inspired by his father, among whose acquaintances were Benjamin Franklin and Joseph Priestley, two pioneers of the new science. Crosse himself attributed it to a lecture on the subject. In any event, he spent much of his time thereafter conducting experiments.

Benjamin Franklin, American political leader and diplomat, writer and scientist. Crosse probably heard about Franklin's own electrical experiments through his father, who was a personal acquaintance

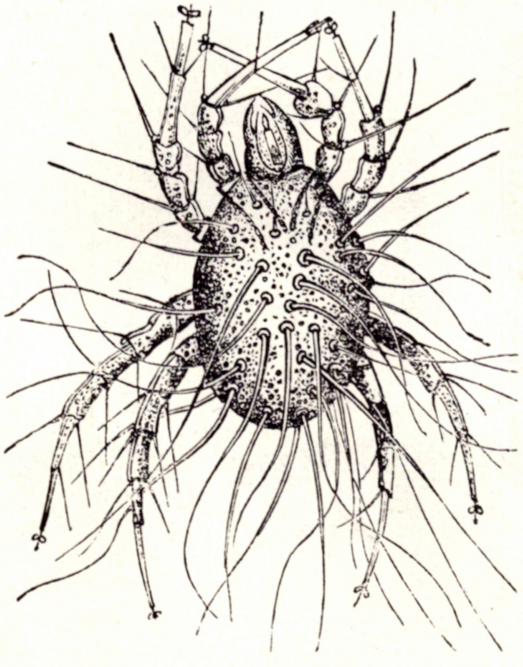
In June 1802 he went to Brasenose College, Oxford. Here he was encouraged to lead a profligate life and he virtually abandoned his experiments.

Crosse inherited the family estates and fortune in 1805 on the death of his mother and teetered on the brink of becoming a typical wealthy wastrel, until he met George John Singer at a party. Singer's great passion for electrical experiments rekindled Crosse's own enthusiasm and in 1807 he began a series of experiments into electro-crystallisation at Fyne Court, his family seat.

In 1837 one of Crosse's experiments resulted in something that has puzzled scientists to this day. From inanimate matter Andrew Crosse created life. He tells how it happened:

In the course of my endeavours to form artificial minerals by a long continued electric action on fluids holding in solution such substances as were necessary to my purpose, I had recourse to every variety of contrivance that I could think of; amongst others I constructed a wooden frame, which supported a Wedgewood funnel, within which rested a quart basin on a circular piece of mahogany. When this basin was filled with a fluid, a strip of flannel wetted with the same was suspended over the side of the basin and inside the funnel, which, acting as a syphon, conveyed the fluid out of the basin through the funnel in successive drops: these drops fell into a smaller funnel of glass placed beneath the other, and which contained a piece of somewhat porous red oxide iron from Vesuvius. This stone was kept constantly electrified. . . .

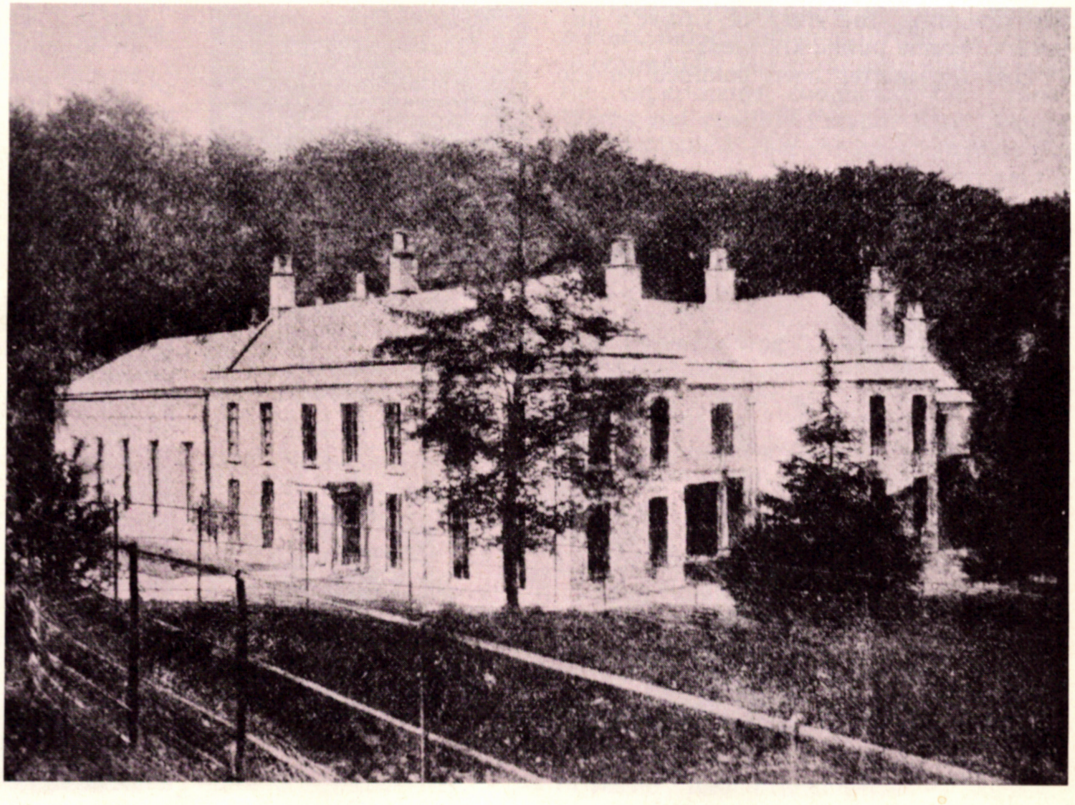
On the fourteenth day from the commencement of this experiment I observed through a lens a few small whitish excrescences or nipples, projecting from about the middle of the electrified stone. On the eighteenth day these projections enlarged, and stuck out seven or eight filaments, each of them longer than the hemisphere on which they grew. On the twenty-sixth day these appearances assumed the form of a perfect insect, standing erect on a few bristles which formed its tail. . . . On the twenty-eighth day these little creatures moved their legs. . . . After a few days they detached themselves from the stone, and moved about at pleasure.



The strange insect that came to life in the bottom of a basin during Crosse's experiments with electricity. Crosse was reviled by the religious community for meddling in God's work when the existence of the 'acari' came to light

Crosse was baffled by this totally unexpected development. He anxiously sought a rational explanation but none seemed available. Over the succeeding months he repeated the experiment. He then wrote:

After many months' action and consequent formation of certain crystalline matters, I observed similar excrescences with those before described at the edge of the fluid in every one of the cylinders except two which contained the carbonate of potassa and the metallic arsenic; and in due time the whitish



Fyne Court, the family seat of Andrew Crosse. Here he carried out his many experiments – for a long time in secret – and gave rise to the local opinion that he was probably an evil wizard

> appearances were developed into insects. In my first experiment I had made use of flannel, wood, and a volcanic stone. In the last, none of these substances were present.

Again no solution presented itself for the appearance of these acari, or tiny mites, and he repeated the experiment a third time. On this occasion Crosse made an error that, far from shedding any light on the mystery, merely served to intensify it:

> I had omitted to insert within the bulb of the retort a resting place for these acari (they are always destroyed if they fall back into the fluid from which they have emerged). It is strange that, in a solution eminently caustic and under an atmosphere of oxihydrogen gas, one single acarus should have made its appearance.

The discovery made public

Andrew Crosse now wrote a report on his 'discovery' and dispatched it to the Electrical Society in London. It was received with some scepticism but sufficient interest to invite another electrical experimenter to repeat Crosse's work. The man chosen for the task was W.H. Weeks of Sandwich in Kent. The results were published in the *Annals of Electricity* (October 1836–1837) and in the *Transactions* of the London Electrical Society (1838).

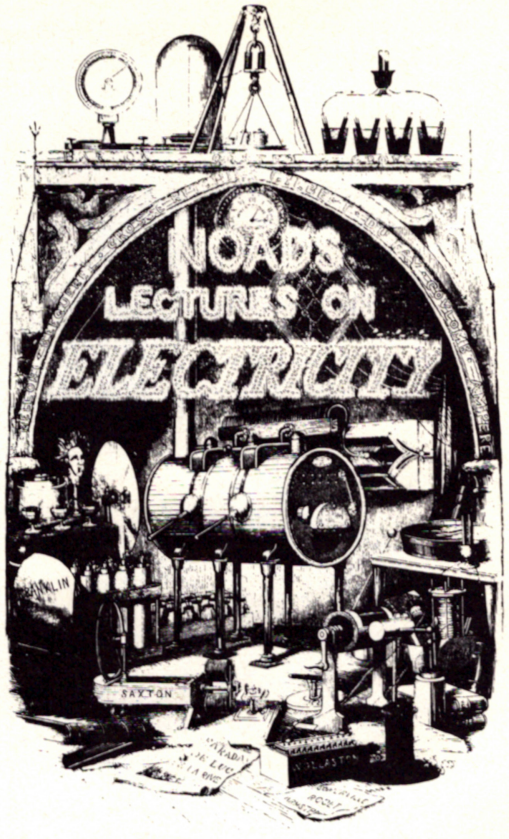
Weeks published only a summary of the results of his experiments, but it seems clear that he took a number of precautions to ensure that no extraneous matter, such as the ova of insects, had in some manner gained entry into his equipment. Weeks worked slowly and methodically. While he was still experimenting, the story of Crosse's discovery became public knowledge.

Had the matter been confined to the scientific community, it is probable that it would not have caused the storm that it did. But Crosse discussed the acari, to which he had apparently given life, with a number of friends. One of these was the editor of the *Western Gazette*. Crosse's second wife, Cornelia, recorded the result:

> . . . the editor of a West of England paper . . . immediately, unauthorised, but in a very friendly spirit, published an account of the experiment; which account quickly flew over England, and indeed Europe, satisfying at once the credulity of those who love the marvellous, and raising up a host of bitter and equally unreasoning assailants, whose personal attacks on Mr Crosse, and their misrepresentations of his views, were at once ridiculous and annoying.

As the storm broke and whirled around Andrew Crosse, many people came to his defence. Among them was the respected scientist Michael Faraday who, in an impassioned lecture at the Royal Institution in 1837, condemned those who attacked Crosse. Faraday also claimed to have conducted Crosse's experiment himself and to have confirmed Crosse's findings. However, this did nothing to lessen the controversy and neither did Mr Weeks, who confirmed that Crosse's experiment did indeed 'give birth' to the acari. In fact, it could be argued that Faraday and Weeks unintentionally intensified the widespread opinion that Crosse was a meddler in the act of creation, a man who set himself up as a rival of God.

Andrew Crosse was angered, hurt,



Right: the frontispiece of *Noad's lectures on electricity*, in which detailed descriptions of Crosse's experiments were published. Crosse's name appears on the top left of the arch above the title, along with other illustrious scientists

Below: the scientist Michael Faraday at work in his laboratory. This respected physicist and chemist was a defender of Crosse during the controversy surrounding his experiments

possibly mystified by the outburst, and he retired to the seclusion of Fyne Court. Here he found himself reviled and shunned by his neighbours. On one occasion a local clergyman, the Reverend Philip Smith, conducted a service of exorcism on the hills above Crosse's country estate.

In 1846 Crosse's first wife and his brother Richard died within four days of each other. Bereaved, Crosse returned to his experiments. In his journal and in letters to friends he wrote of his hopes and aspirations. He said that he wanted to construct 'a battery at once cheap, powerful and durable' – perhaps a vision of the dry-cell battery that was patented by Georges Leclanché in 1868. He also experimented with the preservation of food and the purification of sea water and other liquids through the use of electricity.

A new lease of life

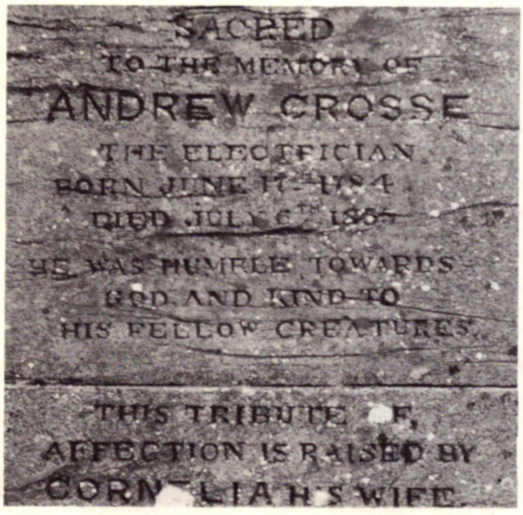
In the late 1840s Andrew Crosse emerged from his self-imposed seclusion at Fyne Court. In 1849 he met Cornelia Burns, still in her twenties, and romance blossomed. Crosse took on a new lease of life and even began attending a few social gatherings. On 22 July 1850 the two were married.

Over the next five years Crosse's health began to deteriorate and on 26 May 1855 he suffered a paralytic seizure. He never recovered. On 6 July he awoke in terrible pain. Holding his young wife's hand just before dying, he said, 'My dear, the utmost extent of human knowledge is but comparative ignorance.'

Today Andrew Crosse is all but forgotten, just one of the many amateur scientists who in some small way contributed to the widening of scientific knowledge. Where his name is remembered, it is not in scientific textbooks but in books about mysteries.

The question remains: what were the acari? Nobody in recent years has been known to repeat Crosse's experiment, and no solution to the mystery seems to be generally accepted. Several theories have, however, been proposed.

Dr A.C. Oudemans in 1934 suggested that



Left: Crosse's grave stone. The inscription refers to him as 'the electrician' – a modest designation for a man whose intricate experiments and slightly odd character made him a storm centre

Right: a giant insect is about to attack in the story *The electric vampire*, which appeared in the *London Magazine* in 1910. It was inspired by the tales about how Crosse had created life in his laboratory in an insect-like form

Below: Mary Shelley, author of *Frankenstein*. Crosse in many ways lived up to the popular image of the man she made famous in one of the best-known horror tales in all literature

the acari were *Glyophagus domesticus*, a commonplace insect that has an amazing power to hold onto life no matter what the conditions. It also manages to get into equipment despite precautions to keep it out.

Another idea is that the chemical constituents in Crosse's tests took on a form and gave the appearance of living things.

Perhaps one of these theories could be correct. But it is difficult to credit that the ova of *Glyophagus domesticus* were present in all the experiments conducted by Crosse, Weeks and possibly Faraday. It is likewise hard to believe that the experimenters did not consider and test the possibility that the acarus was not a living creature.

In the final analysis, we do not know what Andrew Crosse's acari were – and the man himself remains strange and extraordinary.

In his book *The man who was Frankenstein*, Peter Haining suggests that Crosse was the model for Mary Shelley's Baron Frankenstein. He points out that, in the autumn of 1814, the Shelleys were visited by the poet Robert Southey, who knew Crosse and had stayed at Fyne Court. The three apparently discussed Crosse's electrical experiments and on 28 December, Mary and Percy Shelley attended a lecture given by Crosse.

The evidence that Andrew Crosse and his experiments with the new science of electricity fuelled Mary Shelley's imagination is at best circumstantial. But this slightly eccentric gentleman-scientist, experimenting in his remote mansion in the wilds of the hazy Quantocks, certainly fits the popular picture of Baron Victor Frankenstein.

A bloody business

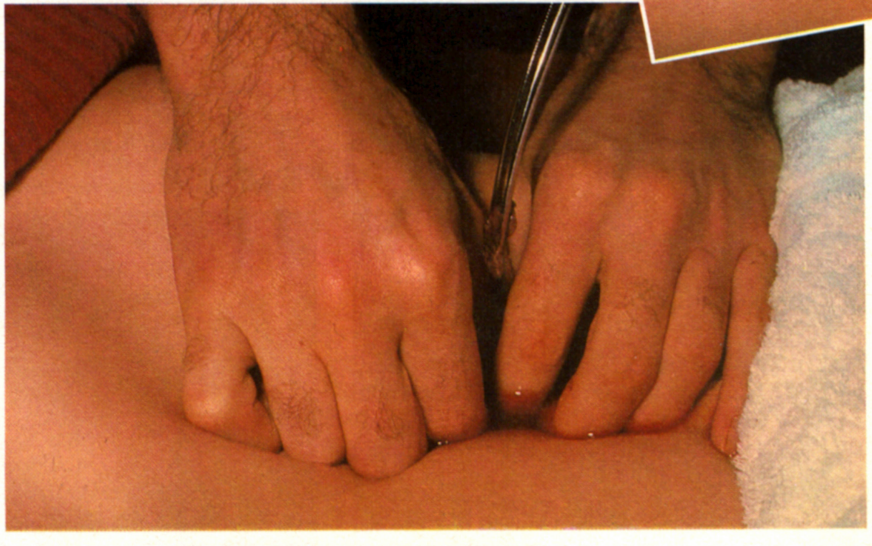
Natives of the Philippines and Brazil are allegedly able to operate on people using only their bare hands. Their skill is enthusiastically praised by their patients – but how does it fare under scrutiny by Western scientists? DAVID HARVEY reports

OF ALL PARANORMAL PHENOMENA, that which has become known as psychic surgery is one of the most extraordinary. Since the 1950s there have been many reports of events, allegedly witnessed by scores of observers and undergone by thousands of willing patients, of bare-handed surgery – dramatic and incontrovertible evidence, it has seemed to many people, that the impossible occurs under the scrutiny of experienced investigators and scientists. There is, remarkably, nothing furtive about the practice: it can be seen taking place in broad daylight. Here at last, many people were convinced, was the real thing, a paranormal effect that was not only genuine, but could be produced to order in any circumstances.

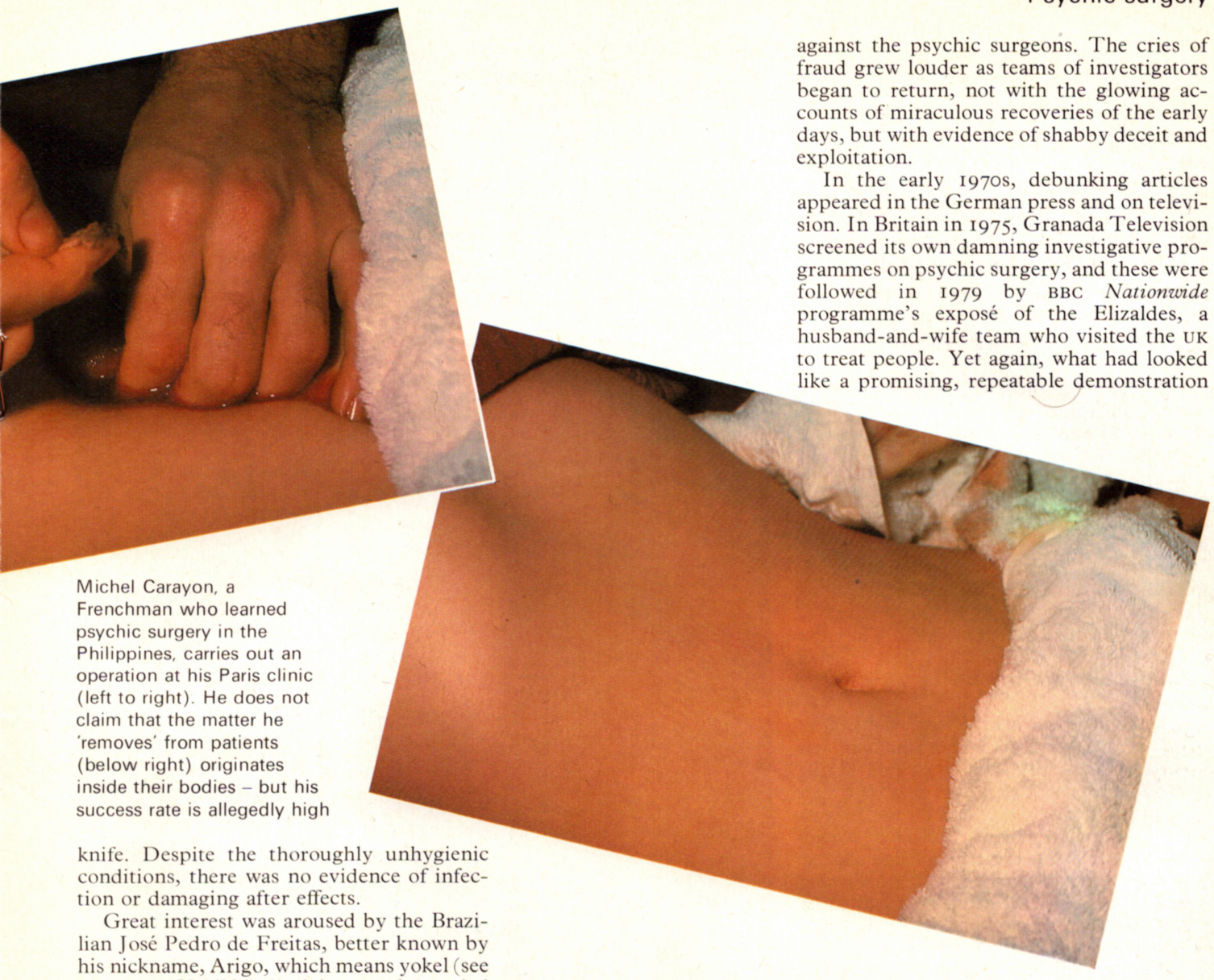
Despite these extravagant claims, however, psychic surgery is now regarded by many people as no more than a shabby deception – or, more kindly, if patronisingly, as the product of primitive and superstitious cultures. Its history seems to have followed a now familiar pattern: it looked good at first, but its credibility was whittled away by the criticism that was levelled at it until it seemed there was nothing left to believe.

And yet there is, perhaps, another way of looking at the phenomenon. Like many debunking exercises, the ostensibly impartial efforts to get to the bottom of the whole business of psychic surgery leave a great deal of awkward evidence out of the picture – just as, of course, some of those who made excessive claims for the validity of the phenomenon have also been guilty of ignoring the facts that did not fit their case.

Psychic surgery, reported in testimonies and on film, looked good at first. Investigators assured Western scientists that uneducated, medically ignorant men and women daily performed miraculous cures by carrying out what, for all the world, looked like real operations, using their bare hands and sometimes a pair of scissors or a kitchen



Left: the Brazilian psychic surgeon José Pedro de Freitas, nicknamed Arigo, or 'yokel', performs an eye operation. Arigo's surgery, often practised with such crude instruments as rusty scissors and kitchen knives, attracted a great deal of attention in the West. His operations appeared to effect genuine cures – although the work of other psychic surgeons has been laid open to doubt



Michel Carayon, a Frenchman who learned psychic surgery in the Philippines, carries out an operation at his Paris clinic (left to right). He does not claim that the matter he 'removes' from patients (below right) originates inside their bodies – but his success rate is allegedly high

knife. Despite the thoroughly unhygienic conditions, there was no evidence of infection or damaging after effects.

Great interest was aroused by the Brazilian José Pedro de Freitas, better known by his nickname, Arigo, which means yokel (see page 378). Until his death in 1971, he carried out thousands of crude operations using a rusty knife and other equally unsuitable implements that, nonetheless, brought about spectacular results. Later, under the threat of legal action, he restricted himself to diagnosis and prescriptions written after a mere glance at the patient, again with amazing results.

However, it is the more numerous healers of the Philippines who have attracted the greatest attention. They carry out what appear to be real operations using only their hands to open bodies and pull out diseased tissue and offending matter. It was in the mid 1960s that the interest of Western investigators was first stimulated by tales of their extraordinary performances. But after a while controversy – of the sort that was to rage around Uri Geller (see page 621) – centred on the Filipinos. What they were doing, the critics argued, was not carrying out operations at all. They were simply conning patients and onlookers into accepting a cleverly staged deception as real.

The evidence started to stack up heavily against the psychic surgeons. The cries of fraud grew louder as teams of investigators began to return, not with the glowing accounts of miraculous recoveries of the early days, but with evidence of shabby deceit and exploitation.

In the early 1970s, debunking articles appeared in the German press and on television. In Britain in 1975, Granada Television screened its own damning investigative programmes on psychic surgery, and these were followed in 1979 by BBC *Nationwide* programme's exposé of the Elizaldes, a husband-and-wife team who visited the UK to treat people. Yet again, what had looked like a promising, repeatable demonstration

of paranormal powers in action was subjected to the same kind of demolition as many other claims made in the past.

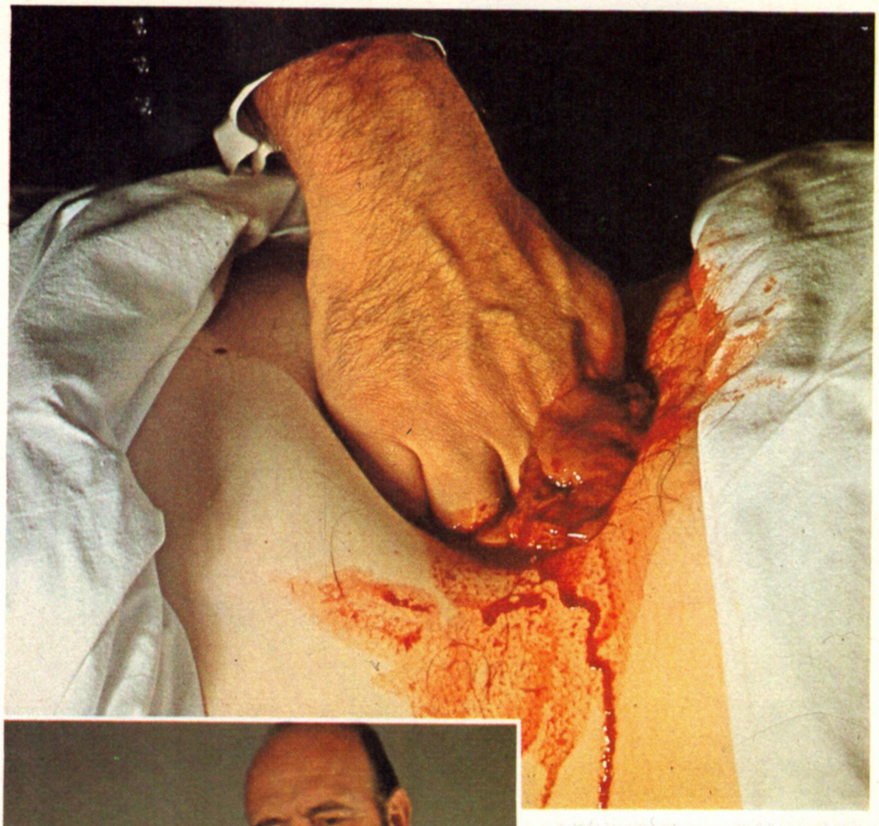
But can the case really be said to be closed? Some are convinced that there is nothing more to be said about psychic surgery. It is simply a case of gullible observers being taken in by impressive but, in the end, identifiable sleight of hand. Is this really all that can be said? To answer these questions, we need to trace the story of psychic surgery back to its roots and look at the evidence more closely.

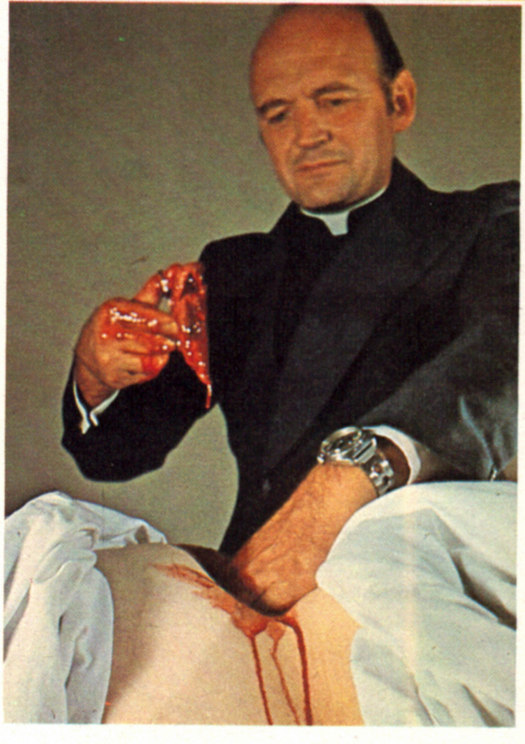
The Geller saga has several points of similarity, but also some important differences. Perhaps the most significant difference to bear in mind is that the Geller phenomenon was a product of Western culture – whatever the merits of his case, it is undeniable that he was launched with all the panache one expects of a manufacturer bringing an exciting new product to the market place.

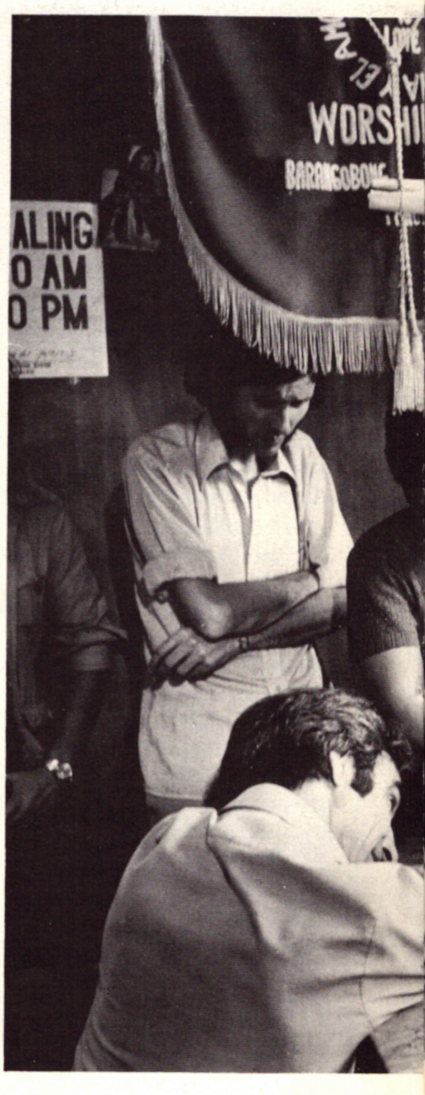
By contrast, the Filipino psychic surgeons were discovered among their own people on their own territory, within the context of their own culture and traditions. They did not advertise their talents, but were tracked down by investigators from the other side of the globe.

The Philippines have a long tradition of belief in the reality of the spiritual and psychic worlds, and this provided fertile ground for Spiritist churches that took root in the 19th century, founded by the French mystic Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail, better known by his pen name, Allan Kardec (see page 518). There are still flourishing chapters of the Spiritist society, founded by Kardec in 1857, throughout the Philippines.

The focal point of Spiritist activity is found on Luzon, the largest island in the archipelago, where biologist, writer and researcher Lyall Watson located the densest concentration of healers in an agricultural community 60 miles (100 kilometres) north of the capital, Manila. The majority of the healers on Luzon belong to the Union Espiritista Cristiana de Filipinas, a network of rural Spiritist churches.







Wonder healers

Western curiosity about the psychic surgeons' alleged abilities was fanned by a number of books that appeared in the 1960s. One of the first was Harold Sherman's *Wonder healers of the Philippines* (1967), which was followed by several others containing first-hand accounts of the phenomenon. Lyall Watson was one of those who went to discover for himself what psychic surgery was all about.

During three separate visits to the Philippines occupying eight months in all, he witnessed over one thousand operations performed by 22 different healers. He was impressed, and remained so despite the controversy that had already begun to detract from the credibility of earlier fulsome accounts of the Filipinos' powers.

Watson went as a scientist to carry out an unbiased investigation of the healers, and *The Romeo error* (1976) gives an account of what he found. There is a blow-by-blow account of a typical operation lasting about five minutes that, as far as Watson is concerned, was a genuine demonstration of psychic surgery.

The subject of the operation was a middle-aged woman who complained of a nagging pain in the stomach. She was asked to lie down on a wooden table, fully dressed; her abdomen was bared and her skirt covered

The attitude of the Christian Church to psychic surgery is ambivalent. In Brazil, where it seems that much psychic surgery is practised successfully, the Catholic Church is sceptical. Father Quevedo, the Jesuit director of the University of Parapsychology in São Paolo, has produced these photographs (left) to show how easy it is to fake psychic surgery. But in the Philippines most of the psychic surgeons are practising members of the local Spiritist Church, and perform their operations surrounded by religious texts such as 'God does the work and I am only his instrument' (below)

Right: the Brazilian psychic surgeon Edivaldo Oliviera Silva performs an abdominal operation on a small boy

with a towel. Like a true sceptic, Watson examined the towel for anything that might be concealed within it: 'I find it innocent, if none too clean.' The healer, dressed in cotton trousers and a short-sleeved shirt, entered and showed Watson he was concealing nothing in the folds of his clothes.

The healer said a prayer. Watson handed him some cotton wool and a bowl that he had himself filled with water from an ordinary tap, and the healer used them to cleanse the woman's abdomen:

> He is now working just to the right of her navel, and suddenly there is a red colour. It could be blood. At first it is watery, mixing with the moisture on her skin, but now it darkens and gurgles quite strongly up between his fingers. . . . I can see what looks like connective tissue, thin, almost transparent, obviously elastic, red and bloody.

The healer appeared to push his hands deep into the patient's body. Pressing hard, he spread the fingers of his right hand, and a large ball, apparently of the patient's flesh, began to grow between the first and second fingers. When, in a matter of seconds, it had reached the size of a tennis ball, an assistant reached over with a pair of forceps and lifted the lump clear of the patient's abdomen. He snipped away at the thread of tissue still connecting the cyst to the patient's body until it came clear, and dropped it into Watson's hand. Watson commented, 'It is warm and when I press it, only a little blood oozes out. It seems to be hard inside.'

After the healer had finished his work and the remainder of the blood had been wiped off the patient's stomach, there was, astonishingly, no visible wound. 'I rub my hand over her skin,' says Watson. 'It is hot, but there is nothing on it, not a mark of any kind.' The woman got up slowly and walked away.

Many other people were to make the trip to the Philippines to observe, speculate and wonder. Thousands travelled to receive treatment from the psychic surgeons, often as a last resort when orthodox medicine had failed to help. Conflicting accounts are given by both patients and investigative groups. Some said that they had experienced or witnessed events that could not be explained away as fraud. Others wrote off psychic surgery as a hoax. By the early 1970s a great deal of interest was being generated in Europe and the USA, but it seemed that the more the phenomenon was studied, the more polarised the investigators' views became.

Sleight of hand?

In 1973, Tom Valentine, a Chicago journalist, published his version of the fact in his book *Psychic surgery*.

> I was convinced that the operations in that house on that morning were not wrought by sleight of hand. We were not hypnotized, and I certainly wasn't allowing myself to be suggestible. . . . Psychic surgery is not impossible, not fakery, not hypnotic suggestion, not a hoax, not a miracle, and is not limited to the Philippines.

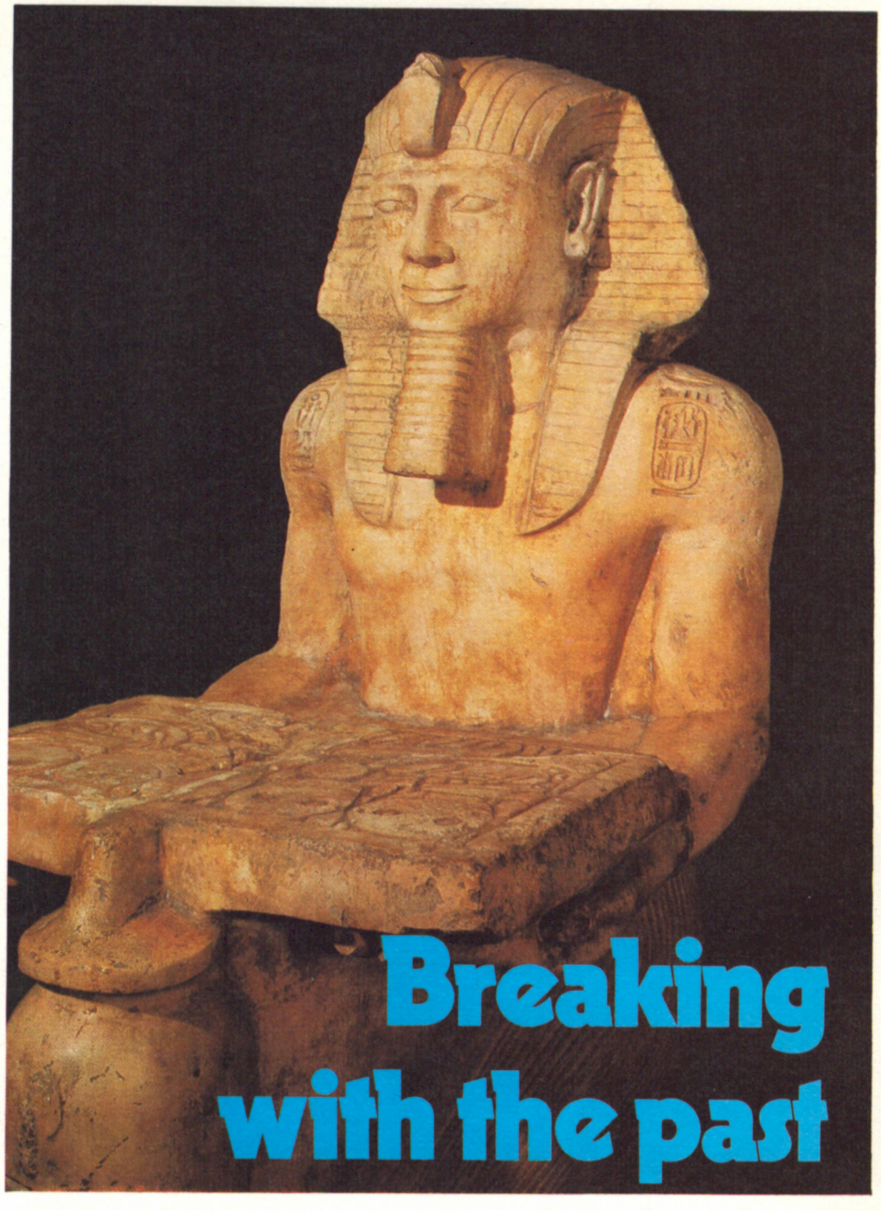
A fact-finding mission comprising experts in medicine, psychiatry, biology, physics, chemistry, parapsychology and conjuring from seven different countries went to the Philippines in March 1973 and April 1975 under the leadership of George Meek. Their party included patients as well as equipment to monitor the surgeons and the results of their work.

They admitted that there were fraudulent practitioners among those who claimed to be genuine healers. But the team agreed that 'the factual existence and daily practice of several types of psycho-energetic phenomena by several native healers was clearly established. The practice of materializing and dematerializing human blood, tissue and organs as well as non-human objects was found.'

Yet subsequent investigations have not come to this conclusion but, quite to the contrary, have condemned outright the practice of psychic surgery as fraudulent. They too have taken out their own experts and followed up the experiences of patients who have been treated and not been entirely cured. Does this mean that one group has reached a totally erroneous conclusion – or could the picture be more complex than these black-and-white judgements suggest?

On page 1814: a review of the evidence for and against the efficacy of psychic surgery

Have we shared previous lives with those who are close to us in this life? Can learning about traumas experienced in other lives relieve emotional problems? ROY STEMMAN concludes his account of Joan Grant with her insights into these matters



Breaking with the past

JOAN GRANT HAS SUFFERED some dreadful deaths. She has been burned as a witch, been killed by a spear through the eye during a joust, and has bled to death when she ordered her Roman court physician to cut her wrists.

Twice she has committed suicide and twice she has died after being bitten by snakes. During a lifetime in Egypt, when she was a man, she was bitten by an insect and died from the infection. Another life ended when she broke her neck in a diving accident.

Joan Grant believes that everyone has had similar past lives, with deaths that are just as traumatic and horrifying. The difference is that most people can no longer remember their previous incarnations, whereas she has had a 'far memory' since childhood. Moreover, she has developed it to the extent that she can recall her earlier lives in exact detail.

Joan Grant perfected the technique of 'shifting the level of consciousness' between sleeping and waking so that she could dictate her dream experiences of previous lives. Seven books of these experiences have been published as historical novels, though she calls them 'posthumous autobiographies'. In addition, she has written about her experiences and abilities in this lifetime (*Far memory*, 1956) and her therapy work with her third husband, Dr Denys Kelsey (*Many lifetimes*, 1969).

The book for which she is best-known is *Winged pharaoh* (1937). It is the story of Sekeeta, a pharaoh's daughter, who became co-ruler with her brother when her father died. Sekeeta spent 10 years in a temple learning to recall her previous lives, an ability she has brought with her into the 20th century as Joan Grant. Sekeeta eventually qualified to be both a ruler and a priest: a winged pharaoh.

In another Egyptian life nearly 1000 years later, Joan Grant was a man: Ra-ab Hotep. His life appeared in two books, *Eyes of Horus* and *Lord of the horizon*, which were published in the early 1940s. *So Moses was born* (1952) dealt with a life when Joan Grant was a male contemporary of Ramesses II.

Joan Grant was born in England in 1907. As well as several lives in Egypt, she had incarnations in other places. In the 16th century she was in Italy, having been born Carola di Ludovici on 4 May 1510. She became a singer with a troupe of strolling players and died at the age of 27. In more recent times, she was an English girl named

Above: Ramesses II, pharaoh of Egypt over 3000 years ago. Joan Grant believes that she lived as a man during his reign, a life she described in her book *So Moses was born*

Left: vultures savaging the carcase of a dead elephant. Vultures hovering over Alec Kerr-Clarkson in a previous incarnation created a phobia about touching bird feathers in this life. He overcame this fear when Joan Grant showed him the root cause of it by 'resonating' with his earlier self and discovering what had happened

Lavinia who broke her back in a fall from a horse. Lavinia died in 1875.

Taken at face value, it would seem that Joan Grant has lived numerous times before her present existence. But that, she says, is too simple an interpretation. She believes that our spirits are far greater than we realise and that each of the many other personalities she can recall has a soul. At death they become part of the whole spirit again. If, for some reason, the soul fails to integrate with the spirit, it produces a ghost. Joan Grant explains: 'Joan and Sekeeta are two beads on the same necklace and the memory they share is contained in the string.'

There are still wider implications to Joan Grant's far memory. She believes that many of the people who are close to us in this life have shared our lives in previous times. Sometimes they were husbands, sometimes wives. They may have been brothers or sisters, sons or daughters, lovers or friends. Our spirit, she asserts, is androgynous and therefore we incarnate in both male and female form. This makes for a wide range of personal relationships over time.

For example, one of the greatest influences on Joan Grant's early life was Daisy Sartorius, a family friend. It was while holding a scarab belonging to Daisy Sartorius that Joan Grant began recalling her previous life as Sekeeta, in the First Dynasty of Egypt about 3000 BC. In that existence, Joan discovered, Daisy had been her mother.

Similar connections were found between previous lives and her third husband, Dr Denys Kelsey. It was Denys Kelsey, a physician and psychiatrist, who cut the veins in Joan's wrists in Roman times on her orders, when he was also a physician. They later shared a life together as husband and wife in 18th-century England.

Dr Kelsey worked in the psychiatric wing at a military hospital in 1948. In trying to help the patients, he discovered the value of hypnosis, at which he became adept. In addition, 'a series of cases came my way which, step by step, extended the framework of what I believed to be fact until, after four years, a session with a particular patient forced me to the intellectual certainty that in a human being there is a component which is not physical.'

Joan Grant's first book had a profound effect on Dr Denys Kelsey. He records in *Many lifetimes*: 'Before I had finished *Winged pharaoh* . . . I knew beyond any possibility of doubt, that reincarnation was a reality. . . . I would have journeyed halfway round the world to meet the author, but fortunately such a long pilgrimage proved unnecessary.' He discovered they lived only 30 miles (50 kilometres) apart. They met in 1958, and within two months 'embarked upon life together'.

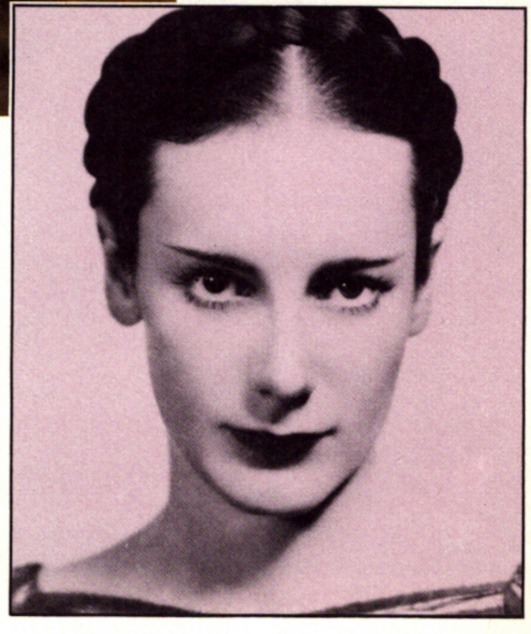
Dr Kelsey had anticipated that his knowledge of hypnosis would link with Joan Grant's knowledge of reincarnation. What he did not realise, until they met, was that Joan had already worked closely with a psychiatrist during the war years and had gained a good deal of psychiatric experience. Now, working as a team, they were able to offer help to many people with a unique form of psychotherapy having its roots in past lives.

Joan Grant knew from her own experience that events in her previous incarnations, such as violent deaths, could have an effect on her present existence. On one occasion, for example, she battled unsuccessfully with herself for one hour in an attempt to pick up a slow-worm. She knew she was in no danger. But part of her was still 'resonating' to a stored memory of agonising pain in three snake-bite episodes in previous lives, two of which proved fatal.

While working in the laboratory of her

Below: a witch being burned at the stake in the late Middle Ages in Germany. In one of her previous lives, Joan Grant believes she died just such a horrible death

Bottom: a group of strolling players rehearsing in 18th-century England. Joan Grant recalls leading the life of a singer with a troupe like this – but in Italy 200 years previously



As a young woman, Joan Grant battled with herself to pick up a slow-worm, which repelled her. She later learned through her 'far memory' that this was a reaction against three very unpleasant experiences with snakes in her past lives – two of which ended in her death

father's Mosquito Control Institute, she had often given blood meals to the mosquitoes as part of her job. She had never had any ill effects. However, on several subsequent occasions, when she had mosquito bites on her eyelid, they produced a totally disproportionate amount of swelling and suffering. The reason, she discovered, was a resonance with her previous existence as an Egyptian captain. A bite on his eyelid, though from a fly, had led to what was probably septicaemia – and death.

According to Joan Grant and Denys Kelsey, once the causes of fears and anxieties are known and understood by bringing them into normal waking consciousness, the latent energy contained in them is defused. The soul can then be properly integrated and the problem usually disappears.

With the discovery that she could resonate with other people's past lives, Joan Grant found she was able to rid individuals of their apparently irrational fears when such emotion was a throw-back to previous times.

An early case, which occurred during her second marriage, concerned a psychiatrist, Alec Kerr-Clarkson. He visited her to discuss the possibility of reincarnation research. At the end of a pleasant weekend, he was about to leave the house to catch a train back to the north of England when her then husband, Charles Beatty, offered him a brace of pheasants, tied by the neck with a loop of string. The psychiatrist, looking embarrassed, backed away and asked if they could be wrapped in a parcel. Charles insisted they would travel better unwrapped, at which point Alec Kerr-Clarkson admitted, 'But I can't touch feathers.' No sooner had he said that than Joan Grant added:

> The reason you can't touch feathers is because you had a death which was very similar to one of mine. You were left among the dead on a battlefield. . . . Vultures are watching you . . . six vultures. You are very badly wounded, but you can still move your arms. Every time you move, the vultures hop a little further away. But then they hop closer again. . . . Now they are so close that you can smell them . . . they are beginning to tear at your flesh.

This account caused the psychiatrist to collapse on a sofa, sweating profusely, and he needed little persuasion to stay another night. Joan Grant spent most of the night at his bedside, during which time she realised what his problem was. He had begun to recall the episode himself quite vividly. 'Why did they leave me to die alone . . . why?' he cried out. 'Every other man had a friend to cut his throat . . . why did they betray me. . . . Me!'

Above: Hurtwood, in Surrey, home of Daisy Sartorius. Joan Grant lived here for a number of years following a personal tragedy. During that time, she recalled her life as Sekeeta – and found out that Daisy Sartorius had been her mother then

It was this feeling of betrayal associated with the vultures that had created the feather phobia. Once Joan Grant was able to convince him that his comrades had not deliberately left him to a slow and painful death, having thought he was already dead, he was cured.

Using hypnosis, Dr Kelsey was able to produce similar past-life recalls in troubled patients. Joan Grant helped the therapy by resonating with the patient's experience and giving more details. Sometimes it was not even necessary for the patient to relive the experience. This happened in the case of a youth who had a severe anxiety problem. One day his parents telephoned to say he had tried to commit suicide that day. Joan Grant decided to delve into his past lives on her own to find out what was troubling him.

Dr Kelsey later was startled to find his wife in a distressed state. She was obviously in acute pain and tears were rolling down her face. He soon realised that she was reliving an episode in a previous life of the young patient. She told him:

> I can feel the blood clots in the tooth sockets. . . . It was bad enough during the first two days, after he pulled out all her teeth, but then the taste got worse and worse, not only dead blood but pus. Then the fever started . . . and she died on the fourth day.

It turned out that the woman concerned had had beautiful teeth that had been pulled out with nail pincers by a jealous husband. The youth had been that woman in a previous life and also had beautiful teeth in his present incarnation.

Dr Kelsey remembered that, in an early session, the troubled youth had said the anxiety problem had begun after an incident in a bar when another youth had threatened: 'I'm going to kick your teeth in!'

When told of Joan Grant's experience and the belief that he had had all his teeth wrenched out by a husband in the 19th century, the young man had no difficulty in accepting it. His anxiety disappeared instantly. Five years later, when Dr Kelsey and Joan Grant wrote about the case, it had not recurred.

Only a small number of people can be helped in this way, but Joan Grant believes that the message contained in her books will help many more. It is, very simply, to view this life – whatever its difficulties and sorrows – as just one of numerous others that will present us with challenges and opportunities to improve ourselves and help others.

Below: Dr Denys Kelsey, husband of Joan Grant, in his army days. The two worked in a psychiatric practice together for many years, and Kelsey still has a practice in their home at Pangbourne in Berkshire

Further reading

Joan Grant, *Time out of mind*, Arthur Barker 1956
Joan Grant and Denys Kelsey, *Many lifetimes*, Corgi 1976
Joseph Head and S.L. Cranston (eds), *Reincarnation: the phoenix fire mystery*, Julian Press/Crown (New York) 1977

Reaching for the sky

Flying saucer cults may be no more than a haven for cranks – but is their interpretation of UFOs much odder than those of certain experts? KEVIN McCLURE compares some of the more exotic ideas entertained by ufologists

CULTS BASED ON UFO CONTACTEES have much in common – in their activities, in the way their leaders receive communications, and in the general tenor of those communications. But the specific claims made in the messages from 'space people' differ wildly from each other. The extra-terrestrials who guide them rarely even come from the same planet. However well-intentioned or warm-hearted the members of the groups may be, the divergences in their claims must lead the outsider to conclude that there is little reason to take them seriously. Whether or not the religious impulse that inspires them is authentic, the scientific trappings that they often don are distortions of valid science.

Yet the claims made by the cults are, if anything, less fantastic and disturbing than some of the theories that have been put forward by respected ufologists who have *not* surrounded themselves with followers and made claims to infallibility.

For example, although some of Brad Steiger's books should not be regarded as expressing his own opinions, the material in which his own attitude *can* be discerned seems to indicate a strong belief in the idea of 'Space Brothers' or 'Star People'. In one of his books the final chapter is contributed by his wife and is entitled 'How to contact multidimensional beings'. It states that 'Socrates, Napoleon, George Washington, Joan of Arc and Bernadette of Lourdes had contact with these beings.' Steiger himself has said:

> I am . . . convinced that there is a subtle kind of symbiotic relationship which exists between mankind and the UFO intelligences. I think that in some way, which we have yet to determine, they need us as much as we need them.

This begins to hint that mankind does not have control over its own destiny, but Steiger nevertheless believes that the higher beings with whom we are in contact are benevolent. Other writers have more frightening ideas. They believe that alien powers can control the experiences we have and the way we respond to them. Hypotheses of this kind are known as the 'control system theory', which is generally associated with Jacques Vallée:

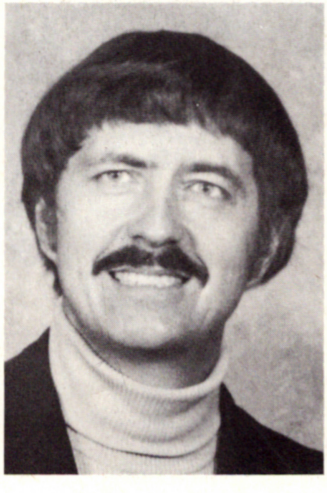
> UFOs are the means through which man's concepts are being arranged. All we can do is to trace their effects on humans. . . . I suggest that it is human belief that is being controlled.

That is what Vallée wrote in *The invisible college*. He went further in *Messengers of deception*:

I believe there is a machinery of mass

Above: UFOs descended on a French village in 1974 – but left no clue to their origin

Below: popular science writer Brad Steiger, who seems to believe that many historical figures were in touch with space beings



Above: D. Scott Rogo, whose account of UFOs includes the notion that the intelligence behind the phenomenon knows what humanity is thinking, and that contactees are 'the tools of a global plan'

> manipulation behind the UFO phenomenon . . . UFO contactees are the tools of a global plan. These silent agents are walking among us unseen, placing social time bombs at strategic spiritual locations. Some fine morning we may wake up from our 'scientific' complacency to find strangers walking through the ruins of our Establishments.

Jerry Clark and D. Scott Rogo are a little plainer in their account:

> Let's begin by supposing that somewhere in the universe there is an intelligence or force – we'll call it the Phenomenon for want of a better word – that's beaming projections of various kinds into our world. . . . Whatever its nature, it has some deep sense of what human beings are thinking, and it provides us with visions that reflect the concerns of the human mind.

Writing on his own account, Rogo has stated:

> UFO abductions are physically real events. But they are dramas materialised into three-dimensional space for us by the Phenomenon. They are dreams that the Phenomenon made come to life in very frightening vividness. . . . Once someone has entered into psychic contact with the Phenomenon the link may become permanent, and reactivate periodically.

This is heady stuff, coming from figures of such stature and influence in the UFO field. But even Dr J. Allen Hynek, who has done so much to help make ufology respectable and acceptable on both sides of the Atlantic, has commented:

> There are people who've had UFO experiences who've claimed to have developed psychic ability. There have been reported cases of healings in close encounters, and there have been reported cases of precognition, where people had foreknowledge or forewarning that they were going to see something. There has been a change of outlook, a change of philosophy in persons' lives. Now, you see, these are rather tricky things to talk about, but it's there.
>
> Many people, like Jacques Vallée and I, to some extent, feel that it might be a conditioning process.

No hiding place

The control system theorists are not writing about occasional isolated incidents but about the worldwide evidence of a system to which mankind is bound and from which it cannot escape – a system that, they claim, existed before humanity appeared and will in turn outlive it.

John Keel's theories are perhaps the most terrifying of all. For him the control system, which he calls the Eighth Tower, is no longer running the show intelligently, but instead

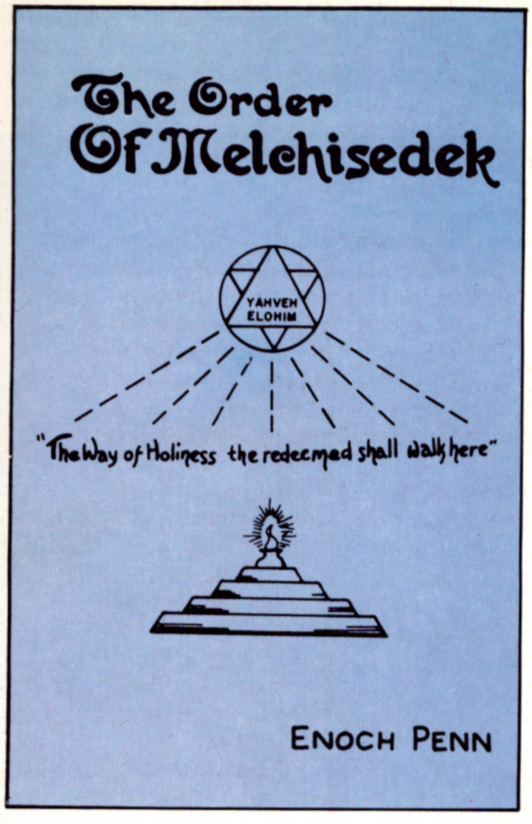
The last days of the world

In *Messengers of deception* Jacques Vallée suggests that the UFO contactee cults are part of a sinister plan to undermine the power of rational thought for political ends. While the desire to change the world is plain enough in the 'teachings' of contactees like Claude Vorilhon (left and, below, his book), will many people act on them?

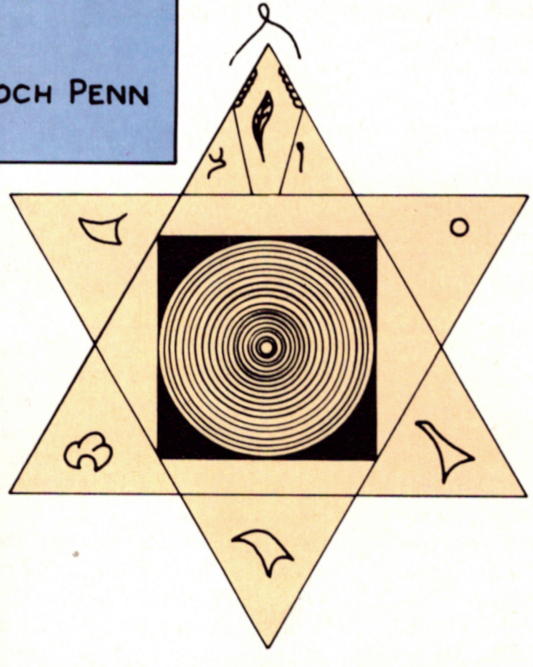
Vorilhon claims to have been chosen by extra-terrestrials because he is French, from 'the country where democracy was born', but in order to survive the 'last days' of the present age we must 'eliminate elections and votes' and disband the military everywhere. The 'Elohim' – a Hebrew word meaning 'the gods' – will then return and give us the benefit of their wisdom.

The space people also gave him a new name and his peculiar insignia – a swastika set within the star of David. As if this were not enough, Vorilhon (now 'Rael') naïvely recounts other benefits of his position such as his romp in a bathtub with no less than five singularly lovely extra-terrestrial female robots! All this is told in the course of appealing for funds to build a mansion to house the Elohim when they return.

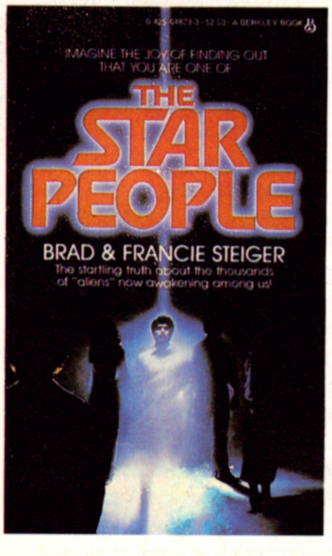
Do Vorilhon's simplistic and contradictory notions hold any political dangers? Probably not – but this century *has* seen far more irrational ideas turn into hideous reality.



Left: the cover of a book by Ernest Penn, a member of the now-defunct American religious sect, the Order of Melchisedek. From its writings it is clear that the group expected to gain earthly power, though the means to gain that power (among other things members were enjoined to refrain from orgasm, for example) were not calculated to gain it much popularity. Some of the ideas as well as the name of the sect have been taken over by contactee cults in the USA and elsewhere. The pentacle (below) was given to author Jacques Vallée by the French Melchisedek group



Below: Brad and Francie Steiger's book *Star people*, in which they discuss the presence of aliens on Earth and their plans for humanity


IMAGINE THE JOY OF FINDING OUT THAT YOU ARE ONE OF
THE STAR PEOPLE
BRAD & FRANCIE STEIGER
The startling truth about the thousands of "aliens" now awakening among us!

Further reading

Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken and Stanley Schachter, *When prophecy fails*, University of Minnesota (Minneapolis) 1956

Ronald D. Story (ed.) *The encyclopedia of UFOs*, New English Library 1980

Jacques Vallée, *Messengers of deception*, And/Or Press (Berkeley) 1979

has gone out of control and is blindly following some preordained plan:

> The human race has always been aware that it was serving as a pawn in some cosmic game. . . . We have been programmed well, but the Eighth Tower is dying of old age. The manifestations around us are not the work of the gods, but of a senile machine playing out the end game.

This implies that humanity has only the illusion of free will in the conduct of its affairs – a view more pessimistic than all but some extremely Calvinistic forms of traditional religion.

Certain Christian groups, particularly among the evangelical movements, have viewed the UFOs as sinister, though not as controlling human activity. The respected *Journal* of the Spiritual Counterfeits Project devoted an issue to UFOs and concluded thus:

> Current UFO phenomena, insofar as they complete the patterns of fallen human speculation discussed earlier, while playing to that ignorant dynamism which drives us to the stars (to the neglect of our souls) cannot but be suspected of having their origin with Satan and his companions in spoilage and deceit. Add to this both the theological and statistical improbability that an extra-terrestrial race ever would (or could) visit Earth, and the odds lean greatly in favour of the possibility that UFOs *do* represent a visitation, but of extra*dimensionals* – demonic spirits which have gained the power to actually perform materialisations in the physical realm.

Setting Satan's stage

John Weldon and Zola Levitt, authors of a number of books on the paranormal written from a Christian viewpoint, have said:

> Quite simply we think the demons are preparing the coming of the Antichrist. . . . To properly set the stage for the Antichrist, who really is a supernatural personality, the world has to be made ready to think in terms of the new and the strange. . . .

Meanwhile, an English clergyman, the Reverend Eric Inglesby, comments:

> As psychic phenomena (which many UFOs are) the subject is interesting and potentially dangerous; in their spiritual aspect, involving the destiny of immortal souls, whether by false belief, or by spirit possession, or even by abduction, UFOs are not just dangerous – they are deadly. In some respects they are visible manifestations, to those who actually see them, of those principalities and powers which St Paul clearly identified as evil, not good.

Are UFOs as damaging as this mass of diverse opinion suggests? There is no convincing evidence to support the contention that they are physically or psychologically dangerous in a *direct* way: they cannot control our minds. But we can *make* UFOs dangerous to ourselves by bringing our own desires and fears to bear on the mass of recorded UFO data. Any of us can find material in that enormous accumulation to support our own personal opinions. The people who have created UFO contactee cults have built their own elaborate superstructures of belief.

We must regard the over-speculative interpretation of UFO data as a kind of temptation from which even the most intelligent, experienced and knowledgeable of commentators are not immune. The information we possess about UFOs makes a whole that is self-contradictory, confusing, outlandish and, often, incredible. We need to keep that simple fact in mind before building up our speculations on some selected part of the evidence.

Post script

Your letters to THE UNEXPLAINED

Dear Sir,
I was very interested to read about PMIR (psi-mediated instrumental response) in issue 79, because I have had several instances of this in my life. The last instance was one of the most striking.

I was on my own in the house and had decided to have an early night. I shut the internal doors downstairs (this being a specification of our house insurance) and went to bed. A few minutes later I suddenly felt very thirsty – unbearably so. Feeling decidedly grumpy about it, I went downstairs to the kitchen to get some water, but then I couldn't find a glass. I thought 'if it's not one thing it's another . . .' and went into the living-room to get one. As soon as I opened the door I smelt gas. I had not quite turned off the gas fire, leaving a leak. I must admit my bad mood evaporated instantly, leaving me feeling grateful (but to whom or what?) and very, very superstitious! And then I discovered that I wasn't thirsty any more.

Of course, many people would say that I had smelt the gas subliminally and that *that* was the reason I got up. This may be true, but I wonder why my mind felt it necessary to embroider the situation as a raging thirst? Or why did it take me about half a minute longer than necessary – going into the kitchen, looking for a glass, instead of going straight into the living-room where the leak was?

Perhaps it is true that psi affects us all much more often than we suspect, but most of the time we tend to put such fortuitous escapes and so on down to 'coincidence' – which explains nothing.

Yours faithfully,
Teresa Croxley London

Dear Sir,
With reference to the Photo File section of issue 75 of *The Unexplained*, there are two points that Ground Saucer Watch (GSW) wishes to clarify.

The caption concerning the Calgary, Canada, photographs directly implies that the GSW computer analysis continually produces bogus results. GSW has never claimed 100 per cent accuracy with the computer image processing technique. However, after six years of evaluating approximately 1100 purported UFO photographs and finding a mere 45 pictures bona fide – that is, a structured image – we feel that the system is accurate 98 per cent of the time.

There is a story, of which you are probably not aware, concerning the Calgary photographs. In 1976 and 1977 GSW analysed both of the Canadian photographs and found them bona fide. However, we used 'first generation' black and white prints. Knowing that Dr Hynek had colour copies, we asked the Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) if we could use these for computer enhancement. CUFOS forwarded both copies and an unfortunate mistake occurred. The photographs were separated: one picture was evaluated in Phoenix, Arizona, and the other was sent to California for processing. After a week the critique was written up from the two separate processing locations, and one photograph was accepted, the second was interpreted as a hoax.

The information on the California photograph was analysed as a hoax because of excessive blurring on the CUFOS print, which occurred during the copying process. The contradiction was immediately picked up by Dr Hynek's associate Allan Hendry, who wrote about the incident in his UFO book. GSW, like CUFOS, believes that the Calgary photographs are some of the best daylight photographs taken of UFOs in the 1970s.

The second point we should like to make concerns the ridiculous Pelham, Georgia, photograph taken in late August 1973, during the fever of the American UFO flap. This photograph has been evaluated as a time exposure of the bright star Sirius. The dash effect on all the star trails is due to the witness placing a lens cap over the camera when traffic went by to 'save' the picture from excessive light (exposure). The appendage on the side of the 'UFO' is common to all of the other star trails and was caused when the camera was accidentally bumped to the left. The 'UFO' is predominate because it is brighter.

The most obvious feature in this interpretation is the fact that the 'UFO' and the so-called star trails are all moving in the same direction (downward). If the object in question was truly a bona fide UFO or even a powered craft, how can anyone explain the exact angle of their movement? Of course, this is not the first time *The Unexplained* has implied that a UFO picture is mysterious or called a bogus photograph valid.

Yours faithfully,
William H. Spaulding (GSW, INC.) Phoenix, USA

Yes, occasionally we have slipped up over UFO photographs, but we are always happy to be corrected. However, it wasn't our intention to deride GSW's sterling work in UFO photo analysis, simply to point out that even the best of methods has its pitfalls. Unfortunately we didn't know that in this case the otherwise highly reliable Allan Hendry had not given a full account of the facts.

Dear Sir,
I should like to tell you about a strange event that occurred in November 1975. I was living alone after the break-up of my first marriage, and my bits and pieces of furniture were stored in a Croydon depository. One Friday I dreamed that a large building was alight from top to bottom. The following day when out shopping I heard a loud 'plop' by my feet and upon looking down saw on the ground the remains of a burned-out candle in its holder; it had apparently just been extinguished. I picked it up, puzzled as to where it had come from. A week later I found out that the depository holding my furniture had caught fire and I had lost all my personal belongings.

Another strange incident occurred one evening, while I was reading the newspaper outside on the patio. The article concerned the return to television of the programme *What's My Line?* I was just reading a line that described the show as 'odd jobs for odd bods' when I heard the telephone ring. My wife picked up the receiver and, when I asked her who it was, she said it was a wrong number and that the caller had asked for a 'Mr Bod'. The odd thing is that there is no such name in the telephone directory.

Yours faithfully,
F. Tompson Redhill, Surrey

Send *your* letters to THE UNEXPLAINED, Orbis House, 20–22 Bedfordbury, London WC2N 4BT

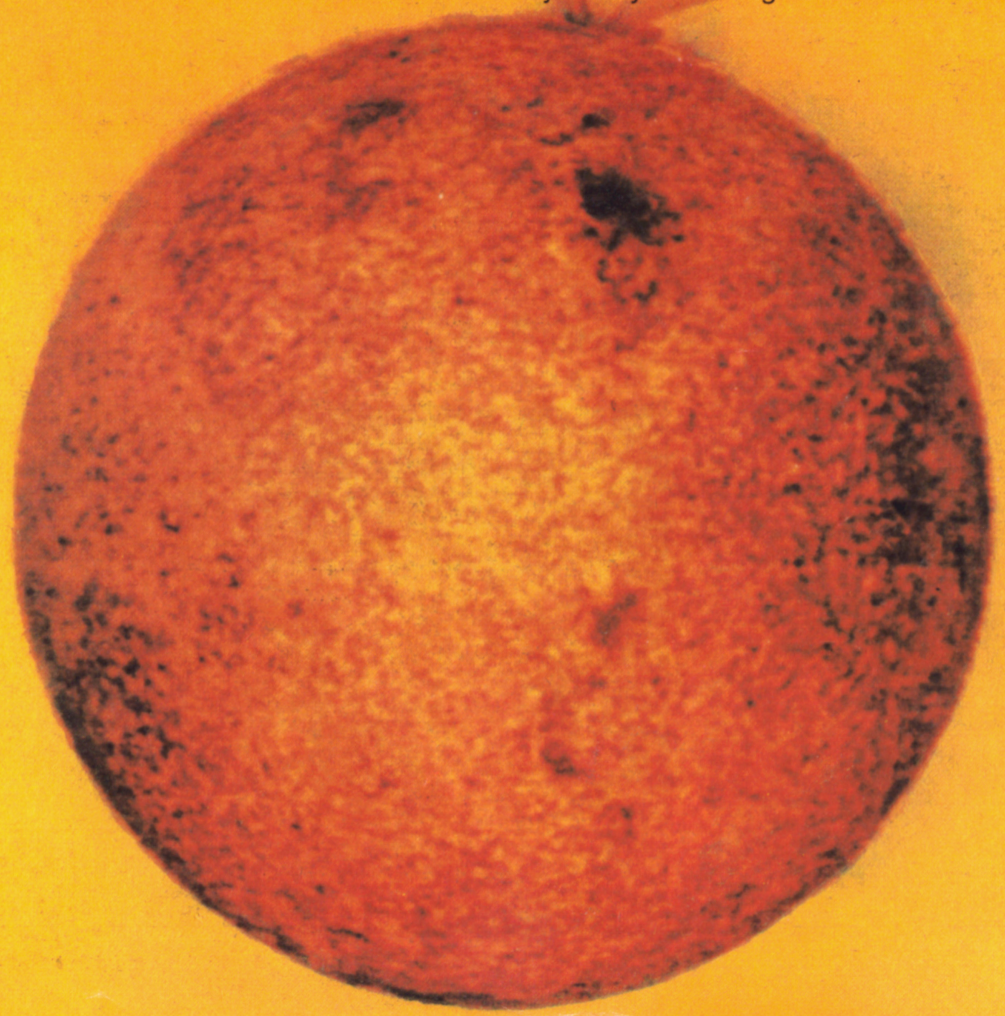
Reading the future

A foretaste of some of the exciting new series coming soon in *The Unexplained*

From apports to ectoplasm
Physical evidence of life after death has long fascinated psychical researchers – as well as intriguing and convincing believers. A survey of the mediums who produce voices of the dead, apports, and more, starts in **issue 90**

The Frenchman whom time forgot
We investigate the case of the Frenchman who vanished for a week after a visit from a UFO – and the strange tales his friend had to tell – **in issue 91**

The atom, the quark and the psychics
Early this century two mediums began to study atomic structures. Now science says they were right. **See issue 91**



Holy blood, Holy Grail – and beyond
A 1982 bestseller claims that Christ had children, and his descendants are still alive. But are the authors right? Did they go far enough? We come up with some startling new answers in **issue 92**

The most haunted house in England
Since the 1940s the ghosts at Borley Rectory in Suffolk have been argued over. Is the whole story a hoax? Or was there – and is there still – something strange going on? **See issue 93**

Mysteries of the Sun
Can spots on the Sun influence the health of human beings? And could the nuclear 'fires' at the Sun's centre have gone out? Some startling theories are discussed in **issue 94**

The Bible: treasury of the paranormal
Both the Old and New Testaments are a goldmine of information about paranormal occurrences, visions and miracles. **See issue 94**

Photographs of the spirit world
Can spirits be captured by the camera? Photographs of the paranormal are among the most difficult of all evidence to assess. We present a comprehensive collection of rare pictures in **issue 95**

The people of the sea
Legend and folklore abound in tales of mermaids and mermen – the half-human people of the sea. What is the truth behind these stories? **See issue 95**